

Residing in an RV or Travel Trailer

GENERAL

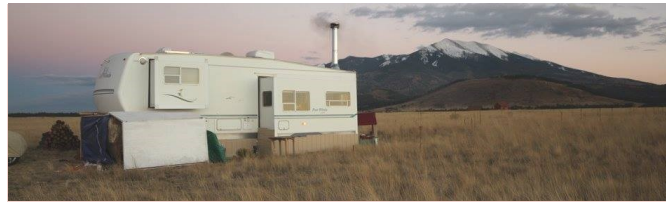
This brochure provides guidance and best practices for living in an RV or travel trailer in Coconino County. Either a **Temporary Use Permit** (TUP) or **Conditional Use Permit** (CUP) are required by the Community Development department to aid in the proper siting and setup of your RV, as well as to honor regulations and neighborhood input.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE APPLYING FOR A PERMIT

- 1) *How will I provide utilities to my RV if I am living off the grid?*
- 2) *How will winter conditions affect my property and my RV?*
- 3) *What impacts might my RV setup have on neighboring properties?*
- 4) *How can I live safely and securely?*

A list of best practices addressing each of the above questions is found within this brochure. There are various types of permits that may be required, depending on the setup for your RV and the length of time you intend to live in it. **Permits include, but are not limited to:**

- 1) **Temporary Use Permit** (for **up to 120** days **or** for 6 months while building a home with an **active** building permit)
- 2) **Conditional Use Permit** (for over 120 days or for “**anytime**”/permanent setup)
- 3) **Electrical Permit** (grid-tied electricity or solar panels with batteries)
- 4) **Mechanical Permit** (external propane tank or wood stove)
- 5) **Wastewater Permit** (if installing an onsite septic system)
- 6) **Plumbing Permit** (cistern or rainwater catchment for potable water use)



RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS FOR USING AN RV AS A PERMANENT RESIDENCE

- 1) *Wastewater must be treated onsite with a permitted septic system, or wastewater must be hauled to a dump station. No dumping onsite.*
- 2) *The ability to power and heat the residence must be provided for with an onboard furnace or heater, and APS electric **or** solar panels with battery storage (permit required for electrical and/or solar) **or** a gas/propane generator. Permits are required for external propane installations and solid fuel-burning appliances such as wood and pellet stoves. The RV must include a cooking apparatus such as a microwave oven or propane stove with appropriate ventilation.*
- 3) *Water storage must be available on site, either onboard or in an exterior storage tank/cistern (permit required for potable water supply, including cisterns).*
- 4) *Outdoor storage of equipment, machinery and associated parts, building materials, and fuel containers must be screened with fencing or firewood.*
- 5) *There should be no impacts to neighbors from lighting, odor, or noise. If a gas generator is used to power the residence, it must have sound buffering materials surrounding it to dampen the sound. Exterior lights on the trailer must be shielded or have dim/low-wattage light bulbs installed.*

Coconino County Community Development
2500 North Fort Valley Road Building #1
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

Phone: 928.679.8850 or 1.800.559.9289
Fax: 928.679.8851
www.coconino.az.gov/communitydevelopment



Best Practices for Using an RV or Travel Trailer as a Residence



**Coconino County
Community
Development**

Off-grid Utilities:

- 1) **Water** can be hauled and stored onboard the RV, or in an external cistern (permit required).
- 2) **Septic/wastewater** can be hauled off site to an approved dump station location, or a septic system can be constructed on the property (permit required). Composting toilets are a great option for RV use and can be installed in place of the standard RV toilet. Keep track of your onboard storage tanks so they do not overflow between trips to empty them. If attaching to a permitted septic system, use a standard RV flex hose to connect to the septic opening and ensure that the entry point is sealed with a clamp, is insect- and water-proof, and that there is no air leakage to allow odors to escape. If building a home at a later time and utilizing the same septic system, a resize application may be needed.
- 3) **Solar panels** with battery storage (permit required) or a gasoline/propane **generator** can be used to power the RV when needed. When it gets cold, solar battery performance drops drastically. Keep plenty of fuel onsite.
- 4) A large external **propane** tank (permit required), in addition to the onboard propane tanks, can provide reliable heat for the RV furnace. Check tank levels frequently. A woodstove (permit required) can supplement an RV furnace in the winter.
- 5) RV **refrigerators** often come with an electric/propane switch for power; propane is more reliable and less costly if off-grid.
- 6) Install **LED lightbulbs** to save on electricity usage within the RV.
- 7) Many RVs come with a propane-powered **stovetop and oven**; never use these to heat the RV! If you use a wood stove (permit required), consider purchasing cast iron cookware to cook your meals on the woodstove, which will safely heat your RV at the same time. Using a heat-powered fan atop the wood stove can transfer heat around the RV quickly without electricity.



Winter Preparedness:

- 1) Do you have a way to **plow your driveway**? Are you located off a County-maintained road? If not, it is important to have a back-up plan in case you get stuck on your property for days at a time. Keep plenty of food and water as well as fuel/propane/firewood on site.
- 2) Do you have a way to keep your water and wastewater **lines from freezing**? Installing a furnace vent into the bay of your RV where the pipes/lines are can help keep them from freezing, or running an electric cord with a 60-watt incandescent bulb into the bay may help keep the air in the bay just above freezing, depending on outside temperatures.
- 3) **Insulate** as much as possible. Install rigid insulation with siding skirting your RV to block the wind from blowing underneath it, which will keep the interior of the RV a warmer temperature. Install thick curtains inside the RV to help keep out the cold.
- 4) **Mice** and other critters want a warm place to stay during the winter. Mouse-proof your RV by sealing any holes and spaces wider than your pinky finger that could be accessed from the outside. Keep in mind that animals may try to hibernate underneath your RV.
- 5) If you install a **wood stove** (permit required), ensure that there are fireproof materials installed on the RV walls behind the wood stove and a hearth pad on the floor underneath it. Just meeting the stove specifications for distance from walls will not be enough; the RV walls will get very hot and become a fire hazard.

Neighborhood Impact:

- 1) Ensure that the RV is not placed within property **setbacks**.
- 2) **Outdoor storage** of equipment, machinery and associated parts, building materials, and fuel containers must be screened; firewood can be stacked to become a wall, or fencing can be installed.
- 3) Gas generators are very **noisy**; firewood or straw bales can provide a decent noise buffer.
- 4) We live in a **dark sky** County. Be aware of your exterior lighting and ensure that it is either shielded or a very low-wattage/dim.
- 5) If you are keeping fuels or burning wood onsite, be **Firewise** – clear the area around your RV of grasses and shrubs as much as possible to prevent the spread of fire in case of an emergency.



Safety and Security:

- 1) Do visitors have a **safe way** to drive to your property and approach your residence without tripping and falling? Are cars able to navigate your driveway without being damaged by potholes or obstacles?
- 2) Consider installing a solar-powered **motion detector** light for the exterior of your RV above your entry door.
- 3) Consider purchasing wheel and hitch **locks** to prevent someone from driving away with your travel trailer.
- 4) Install **jack stands** for RV slide-outs if left in the extended position for long periods of time; this will protect the slide-out mechanism and ensure that the slide-out will slide back in when ready to travel.
- 5) Install **tie-down** straps/anchors and roll up your RV awning if wind is predicted.
- 6) **RVs and travel trailers are prohibited from being used as vacation rental units.**